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SIPDIS

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TAGS: PREL PGOV KISL IIZ
SUBJECT: DENUNCIATIONS OF GOI CONTINUE IN SADRIST FRIDAY SERMONS

REF: A. BAGHDAD 1400
 B. BAGHDAD 1309
 C. BAGHDAD 1241

Classified By: Acting Political Counselor Greg D. Elia for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) A sampling of Sadrists mosque sermons from Friday, May 9, in the Baghdad area reveals that vitriol against the GOI and Coalition Forces (CF) continues to flow from Sadrists mosques, despite movement toward a tentative ceasefire between the Sadrists and the United Iraqi Alliance (UIA). Claiming that Muqtada al-Sadr labeled the GOI and ISF "traitors working for the Americans," the sheikh at one of JAM's strongholds, the al-Hikmah mosque in Sadr City, told the congregation that Sadr had sanctioned the killing of ISF as well as local individuals working with the ISF. Similar sentiments were expressed at the al-Kathamyen mosque in East Rashid, where the sheikh said that, "Traitors are working for the CF to kill their own people and destroy their country." Calling the GOI a puppet of the U.S., he suggested that his followers should be fighting these "traitors" to prevent the country from being taken over by the CF and ISF. At the Sadrain mosque in Karadah, the sheikh condemned the GOI's campaign against the Sadrists, and called PM Maliki a traitor executing America's plan. A number of sheikhs also criticized the GOI for shutting down several Sadrists mosques, alleging that the government was in violation of the constitution.

¶2. (C) During his Friday sermon in Sadr City, Sheikh Sattar al-Battat of the Office of the Martyr Sadr asserted that the marjaiyya has remained silent and indifferent to the plight of the residents of Sadr City. Battat declared that "For 50 days Sadr City has been bombed...Children, women, and old people have been killed by all kinds of U.S. weapons, and Najaf remains silent." He added that the absence of a decree from the marjaiyya condemning the ongoing operations in Sadr City has forced the Sadrists to conclude that, "Najaf accepts the massacre in Sadr City." He also had harsh words for the PM, calling the GOI's actions in Sadr City "criminal," and accusing him of "murdering people with the help of a foreign state."

¶3. (C) Comment: Though hostile criticism of the GOI and CF has been a prevailing theme of Sadrists sermons, last Friday's sermons, in which several sheikhs labeled the GOI and those working for the government traitors, are noteworthy. Sheikh Battat's criticism of the marjaiyya is also potentially divisive, and conveniently ignores the fact that since the outbreak of hostilities, Grand Ayatollah Sistani's representative, Sheikh Abd al-Mahdi al-Karbala'i, has repeatedly called on the GOI to ease the suffering of the residents of Sadr City and to provide them with essential services. End Comment.

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